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Silver, James W., "Reasons for Scholastic Decline" (1975). *Clippings*. 45.
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Reasons for Scholastic Decline

TAMPA — Your simplistic editorial on "Failing Grades for the School System" requires some response.

(1) You will notice that verbal scores lost 13 points in five years and then 26 in the next five. Motivation of the kids obviously deteriorated in the 1960s with all the rhetoric of permissiveness and maybe more when job opportunities diminished. It is also possible that the proportion of over-achievers (taking tests can be partially learned) has dropped for the same reasons.

(2) You won't improve things much

by rearranging the chairs in a classroom (though maybe it should be done) or by other frivolity. Students should (and do) learn a lot outside the classroom but the credit work should stick to fundamentals. A student should learn to toot a horn if he so wishes, but not at the expense of learning to write a sentence.

(3) The size-of-the-classroom bit you handed us must have given you a chuckle. The larger the class over 20 makes for less individuality of instruction, less class participation (and more straight lecture) and a lot more paper work which the harassed teacher just can't handle efficiently. You don't need surveys to know that 20 is better than thirty and that 40 is horrible.

(4) Maybe we forget numbers. There are more than twice as many people in Florida now than in the United States when the Constitution was adopted. And now we have compulsory education. Education could be more effective but it will never again be cheap.

(5) Motivation used to come from the home, the church, and society in general. The education system simply cannot be expected to handle it all. And contrary to people like Senator Deeb you cannot teach patriotism, morality, nor even capitalism in a vacuum. Besides, many of the youngsters are doing very well indeed.

JAMES W. SILVER
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9/25/75